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PERSPECTIVES

A PUBLICATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY ADVISORS

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Stories can be transforming for the storytellers as well as their audience…People often end up by telling a story that they did not expect, and in the process they create and share a spark in the darkness – a kernel of truth that exists inside their own experience."

Transformative Storytelling for Social Change

When I learned the focus of this issue of *Perspectives* would be on stories, I read several articles about the power of stories and storytelling. There is research to demonstrate how stories build empathy, how our brains become more active when we tell, and listen to, stories, and how stories can bring about healing. We know stories can inform us about the past; stories can help us in our quest to understand; and stories can transport us by inspiring our imaginations.

Spend any time with a colleague on a road trip, or at a conference, and it is abundantly clear we often have no shortage of stories to share about our institutions, our chapters, our students, and each other. We all seem to love a good "war" story. However, in a moment of reflection I must pause and consider the impact of these stories. What narratives do they perpetuate about our work and about each other? Do these undermine the goals of collaboration and partnership? What do we really know about one another and our journeys?

This year at my institution, our Cultivating Community series focused on untold and under-told stories. It was an opportunity to learn from members of our campus about their histories, their identities, their uniqueness, and their dreams. We saw how their stories shape the way these individuals show up in our offices, our classrooms, and in the academic work they produce. Their powerful stories caused me to begin to reimagine how I approach my work.

I look forward to reading the stories in this issue and the additional reframing I know they will spark for me. I hope, too, these stories will motivate you to consider your story and how you might share it to inspire or transform others.

Wendi Kinney
President

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

On any given day in Philadelphia, you are likely to find individuals meandering the streets and occasionally stopping to gaze up at the buildings. While at first it might appear these individuals are lost, in reality, they are exploring the city's pulse in a way that cannot be found on a historical landmark map of the nation's birthplace. Instead, they are learning about Philadelphia's culture through the eyes and stories of its people, illustrated by more than 3,600 murals across the city.

This ever-growing mural collection – part of the nation's largest public art program, Mural Arts Philadelphia – strives to ignite change by transforming public spaces and individual lives. Countless projects across the city showcase images of hope, knowledge, justice, faith and spirituality and community. A series of 50 rooftop murals depicts "love letters" written along the city skyline. The Porch Light Program – in collaboration with the city's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services – uses mural creation as a means to improve health and wellness among Philadelphians. Collectively, these murals offer insights to residents' experiences and are central to the city's identity. They offer a unique and creative telling of the city's story.

We share this to draw attention to the power that exists in a story. Research conducted by the American Psychological Association, within the discipline of narrative psychology, and even in studies conducted by Yale School of Medicine on the impact of the Porch Light Program mentioned above, shows that storytelling is powerful. It can strengthen communities, promote individual and collective healing, cultivate human connection, inform how we navigate the world, and paint a picture of others' experiences, sparking increased perspective-taking and heightened empathy.

In this field, we frequently focus on the stories of others, whether it be students, volunteers, chapters, or entire communities. We help people shape their stories and empower them to use their voices to make those stories be heard. It is important, rewarding, and humbling work to support and advance the stories of others; however, we have stories that need to be told, too – the stories of our colleagues, peers, and most importantly, ourselves. Our stories have the power to simultaneously connect us and establish our unique individuality in this world.

This issue showcases resilience, self-discovery, pain, beauty, vulnerability, and love. You will find the experiences of individuals that have taken a risk to share a small – or large – part of who they are with the members of this association. You will read a microscopic percentage of the stories that comprise the larger narrative(s) of this field, and hopefully be in awe of the unknown tales beyond these pages. And we hope you will benefit from already known or soon-to-be surprising commonalities with one or more of the authors.

We thank our authors for this gift. We are enriched through their willingness to be vulnerable and share aspects of their much larger stories. They are role models for all of us as we strive to remind each other of the humanity and need for empathy that is central to our work.

In today's society it can often be easier to assign preconceived narratives than seek true understanding through genuine connection. Within our field we are no better - it is easier to create someone's story from afar than learn about it up close. While this issue is only a small collection of the powerful stories among us, perhaps it provides a window into the value that comes from taking time to hear and see the unique experiences that make us who we are.

We look forward to continuing to provide an avenue to develop and share the individual and collective stories that shape who we are and the work we do.

Noah Borton & Brooke Goodman
Co-Editors

WHAT'S YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Stories are powerful. This issue aims to utilize storytelling to help humanize members beyond their professional roles. The portraits below showcase some of the aspects and moments of members' lives that are or are not always visible, that inform who they are and the work they do. These member portraits represent only a microscopic portion of the field, but communicate that every individual has a unique set of experiences that create a larger story, that create the more robust narrative of our profession. We thank all of the individuals that submitted portraits and are willing to share their stories.

Mackenzie Lipman

George Mason University

Graduate Assistant

In April 2015, I received a phone call while I was with my sorority sisters. I was finishing up the final assignments of my junior year. The call was from my grandmother. I decided to ignore it. I then got a text from my brother saying, "You need to answer grandma's call." That is when I knew something was up.

My grandma called a second time. I finally picked up. Inside an on-campus dorm I found out, over the phone, that my mom had just had a brain aneurysm and I was needed at home. I didn't know what to do, but upwards of ten sorority women made sure I was able to make it safely back to my apartment, helped me pack to go home, and even drove me from Washington D.C. to New York.

After two weeks of sitting in the hospital, my mom finally had a stroke that she just could not come back from. I was devastated. My best friend would never be able to hug me, hold me, or talk to me again. Not only that, but she left behind a husband, my brother, and my 12 year old sister.

Throughout the following year, I struggled to exist. I barely made it through my last year in school. I had to pick up the pieces of my home life by planning and executing my sister's Bat Mitzvah, a monumental achievement for Jewish youth that should be planned by one's parents. On top of that, I was in the middle of holding a position within my sorority.

This hurt and pain led me to a job that took me all over the country. After graduation, I became a leadership consultant for my sorority, Sigma Delta Tau. This opportunity was the shaping moment that combined my healing journey and my love for fraternity and sorority life.

I like to think my mom would be happy I have chosen to pursue a career that has to do with helping a community that helped me through the roughest part of my life. I cannot think of a more perfect job to honor my mom than one where giving back, advising, and mentoring play a major role. While I am a graduate assistant right now, I will graduate in August 2019 and start my career within the fraternity and sorority life field.

This story is why I do what I do. It follows me every day when I talk privately with students and plan service events for the community I work with. I make sure to listen completely, give advice wisely, and ensure I am always available to my students.

My mom wrote a letter to me in a journal. She said, "I know you will make it all happen." Mom, I am definitely making it all happen and it's all because of you.

Colleen Coffey Melchiorre

Phired Up Productions

Business Development and Education

It was a warm day in July when my family drove across the country to Philadelphia for our little boy to have open heart surgery. I was nervous about time away from my job but had so much support from clients and colleagues in the industry that it was easy to push "pause."

The surgery that was supposed to be our ticket to hope unraveled into a virtual hell of significant trauma and life saving interventions. We lived in Philadelphia for months and came home to Nashville more stable but needing to list for a new heart to survive. We moved into the children's hospital to wait for a heart and the fraternal community responded.

In the darkest moments, and the darkest days, the fraternal community showed up in major ways. Sisters and brothers from all over the industry decorated our hospital rooms, visited us, fed us, made us laugh, and never gave up hope. More than one human from our association literally helped to raise and transport our other child from Philly to Nashville and back again. My sweet clients took calls late at night and were gracious to meet me at odd places in odd ways. People gave time and love and even money.

The biggest thing this community did was pray and pray and pray for us. My Christian faith is so important to me and when I started to lose it my brothers and sisters brought me back. Please know whatever you believe, I love you and support

you – I identify as a liberal Christian that fully supports and celebrates interfaith experience. For me, in these moments, I was all prayed out and the industry did it for me.

Sorority and fraternity was intended to be a community of people that come together as chosen family to make lives better. My life is so enriched because of this industry and saying thank you for the love, support, and for allowing me to work with so many of you for all these years does not seem like enough.

Today Paul is a thriving seven year old. He is alive by the grace of God and because God gave us so many humans along the way that made us better to help get him better. One fraternity one day will be very lucky to have Paul, who will be able to tell the story of a group of people that loved him when he was little because that's what they vowed to do in membership.

Amanda Wickham

Rochester Institute of Technology

Assistant Director of Club Sports & Specialized Organizations

I joined my sorority as a junior for a few reasons. I was too intimidated to follow through with the process freshman year, college didn't seem complete, and I knew I'd eventually work in higher education. It's interesting to think about where I am today and how that connects to who I was in 2010. Today, I am a working single parent who is challenged daily by the students, volunteers, and professional staff leading the fraternal movement, and I'm beyond honored and humbled.

In student affairs and specifically Fraternity and Sorority Life, it is a 24/7 job. Striving to find balance within this led me to completely disconnected weekends in the Adirondacks. As a newer professional, mother, and recently divorced individual, I was introduced to the "46 High Peaks." Prior to ever visiting, and frankly any major research, I fully committed to the 46r challenge. In order to become a 46r I'd have to hike all 46 mountains above 4,000 feet in the High Peaks region.

I set a goal of 10 in my first summer. I grew up in Maryland and along the coast so I love being outside, but this would be true wilderness and backcountry. After committing to this challenge, I learned these mountains are more than four hours away from me, often take over five hours to summit, and require backcountry navigation. This was all over my head! I took a deep breath and maintained the promise I made to myself. This required learning a lot about backcountry recreation, regulation of the High Peaks region, and conquering imposter syndrome. Since the commitment I made to myself in 2015, I've attempted 19 and crossed off 16 of the 46. From that initial promise, I've learned so much and challenged myself to learn more by earning certifications as Master Educator for Leave No Trace, CPR, and Wilderness First Aid. The mountains allow me to be my best self and show up to work ready and able to give everything I have.

Brieanna Criscione

St. Louis University

Program Coordinator, Fraternity/Sorority Life

In the realm of higher education, particularly the work we do within Fraternity & Sorority Life, we talk about identity often. Whether we participated as an undergraduate student or facilitate the workshops ourselves now, individuals are asked to explore the complexities and intersectionality of identity by listing words or phrases that describe who we are. These identities have shaped the experiences we have and affect how we approach life.

In the traditional sense, I would say I am a heterosexual, cisgender female, with Christian beliefs. I grew up in a lower-middle class family in rural Kentucky and am a first generation college graduate having earned a Master's degree. Additionally, I also happen to be a huge Harry Potter fan. Due to this fandom, I have another identity to add to the laundry list of descriptors that makes me who I am - I am a proud Hufflepuff! For any non-Potter Heads out there, this tells you I am dedicated, loyal, hardworking, not afraid of conflict, tolerant, and fair. If I think about it, proclaiming myself as a Hufflepuff is probably the most accurate identity and representative of who I am in all facets of my life including the way I approach the work I do within Fraternity & Sorority Life.

After only being in my first role as a campus-based professional for a few short months, Drew Dudley, author of This is Day One: A Practical Guide to Leadership that Matters, visited campus. He shared his perspectives on everyday leadership based on his TEDx Talk on lollipop moments. I had an opportunity to speak with Drew before his speech. While I don't remember how we got on the topic, I will never forget he proclaimed he, too, is a Hufflepuff. From then on, his whole approach to leadership and lollipop moments made perfect sense to me. In my daily interactions with students I strive to be an approachable, non-judgmental advisor that is open to different viewpoints. I listen to seek understanding, not to respond. I strive to provide consistency and fairness in a world so focused on privilege, instant gratification, and the blame game. I'm not afraid to put in the hard work and sometimes long hours, but I don't do this to be recognized for my efforts. I do all of this because at the end of the day if I have impacted even one of my students in a life changing way, then I deem that a success. Drew Dudley signed my copy of his book with #PuffPride and I will continue to be proud of my Hufflepuff identity and portraying those traits in the work I do.

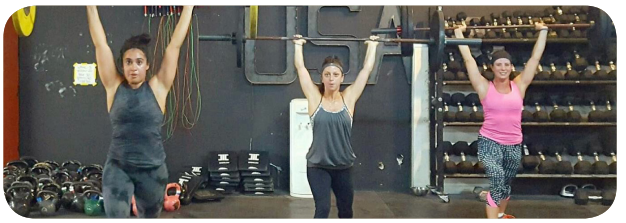
Thea Zunick

Speaker/Coach/Consultant

When I was younger, I used to have a button on my backpack that my mom gave me that said "Petite and Powerful." This made me an unofficial badass in her eyes. However, in my eyes, I knew this was just another motherly attempt to make me feel better about the unfortunate height gene I inherited from my father.

See, as a kid, I was bullied, tossed aside, and called names like "shrimp" and other unsavory things. In dance school

I was often put at the very end of the line for performances, sometimes relegating me to dance in the wings of the stage unseen when there were too many kids in the class. And for those of you who know me on a personal level, the opportunity to be seen on stage during a dance routine was my ultimate nirvana. As bad as that seems, try reaching for your books on the top shelf of the locker as a teen when you are head and shoulders below the height that you should be (according to the medical growth charts) just to reach some boring social studies book. Yeah, I often went to class without my books when it fell too far back in my locker to reach.



Enter CrossFit.

About one year ago during the months of April 2018, I walked into my first CrossFit gym. My hope was to find my new fitness home there because I was running out of options, to be honest. I had tried a bunch of other gyms and wasn't connecting to any of them. I began to grow apprehensive that I would find a gym I could love as much as my old one that had members who would accept me for who I was. As I prepared to engage in the daily WOD, also known as a "workout of the day," a member came up to me and said "Hey, are you new? If so, it's great to have another shortie at the gym with me. I could use another lifting partner." After throwing around some weight with my new friend, crushing some burpees, getting encouragement from the dudes in the class, and receiving a "good job" from another member, I felt at home. My height was no longer a point of marginalization, but something that was needed at this gym and presented an advantage on some moves (lets face it, burpees are easier for me than most because I am already halfway there). I realized quickly that my height was a benefit here, especially because the other shorties at the gym - as we call ourselves - have even more lifting partners now. For the first time, I truly FELT petite and powerful, and I have my CrossFit partners to thank for that. I just wish I still had that button my mother had given me all those years ago.

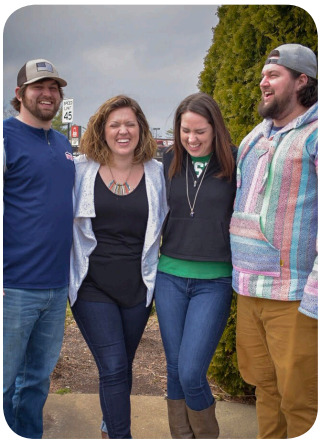
Tara Fuller

Monmouth University

Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life

In 2018, I took a leap and decided to make a trip to Kentucky to meet my biological family. As someone who was adopted as an infant, this was a moment long dreamt about. Two years prior, I met my biological sister, Heather, while in Kentucky on a sorority-sponsored trip, but this trip involved meeting everybody! I wanted my [adoptive] parents by my side the entire time. I was living in Baltimore at the time so we decided they would come down and we would all fly together to Louisville.

As the plane began its descent, I grabbed both of their hands. When the flight attendant said, "Welcome to Louisville," the tears came. It hit me. The flight attendant offered tissues, which I declined. I was okay — these were anticipatory tears, emotional



energy leaving my body. The gravity of the weekend was weighing on me. I couldn't believe it was happening.

My parents and I stayed in an Airbnb in a quaint neighborhood. We decided Matt and Beth, my birth parents, would meet me there on Saturday morning.

Until Matt and Beth pulled up, I paced, called my bestie, cried, and paced some more. They pulled up, I opened the door and when I saw them, with a smile on my face and tears streaming, I said, "I'm already crying!" The next hour and a half was filled with laughs, stories, and some tears.

Then, I texted my parents and told them to come back.

Their greeting was tearful, but full of love and joy. We all sat for another hour or so and told stories, asked questions, expressed gratitude, and laughed. It was amazing to sit between the two couples. They both have such important roles in my life, and now, here they were sharing a space with me.

We then called my siblings, who were on standby for the day. The three of them arrived. Heather, who I had met already, walked in first, "Hi, baby!" She is me with a southern accent! The boys were next, and like Matt, they are super tall. As the eight of us chatted, Matt kept hitting Matthew (my brother) as he watched Heather and me sitting next to each other because he couldn't believe how much we look alike. I have to admit it is both the weirdest and coolest thing!

We eventually left for a restaurant where Matthew's girlfriend, Ben's wife, and my nieces met us. Everyone asked what I wanted the girls to call me and I told them 'Aunt Tara' was perfect. When I first saw Loren, the 4 year old, she looked at me and then looked up at her mom, Kristen. Kristen asked her who I looked like. She said, "Aunt Heather." From the mouths of babes — it's official, we look alike.

The last people we added to our crew for the day were my biological grandmother, uncle, aunt, and cousins.

What a beautiful day it was! I feel so fortunate about the love we experienced and grateful for this beautiful adoption story.

On Sunday morning, as planned, my brothers, sister, and I went out for a sibling breakfast. It was just the four of us and it was so special. I will always identify as an only child, since that's how I was raised, but my heart is full thinking about those three.

For so long, I had shared the story of my adoption and got really good at playing the role of the narrator. In preparation for this visit, I realized I was the main character, too! It turns out, the narrator in me couldn't fill in the blanks about the rest of the story until we lived it.

Dennis Campbell

Kent State University

Assistant Director for Fraternity and Sorority Life

I come from a blue-collar family. Being the son of a truck driver, I have done things most people have never experienced and makes my friends shake their heads at my stories and my experiences. On the weekends I spend time "scrapping" where my father and I service a local auto group and pick up all their scrap metal at five different locations. We started doing it when I was younger to fund activities in our Boy Scout troop. This included most of the boys in the troop getting to participate in activities for years without paying as our troop was in a low socio-economic area of town and funding was hard to come by. Now we do it to fund projects at the Boy Scout Camp, pay for my chapter leaders to travel to our convention, and make a little extra side cash.

Mostly I do it to spend time with my dad. But it has also given the chapter members I advise a way to raise money for the costs they otherwise wouldn't be able to afford and for them to give back to a local non-profit in the Boy Scouts, which many of them participated in. It has created a bond between my dad and I with my chapter members that I would never have expected. Most weekends a couple of the brothers are up at 6 a.m. waiting to be picked up by me and my dad to do heavy lifting for a variety of causes. It probably makes us some of the most educated people collecting scrap metal, but it is what I grew up doing, what gave me many of my scouting experiences, and gives the men I care about opportunities I never had. It is how I give back to what made me the man I am today.

Donald Moore

Rutgers University - New Brunswick

Assistant Director, Fraternity and Sorority Affairs

I stopped believing in coincidence a while ago. Who I am, what I am, what I do, and the person I am becoming are no accident. I do not believe I am more unique or significant than the next person. My path is my path, just as your path is yours alone. I no longer make excuses for my existence or try to justify it to anyone. My peaks and valleys have all served a purpose. I am who I am.

As professionals, we wear many hats. We cater to many and in that process can forget who we are and what we need. I don't think there are many people who have not had that experience at one time or another. We have a tendency to push students to their limits but do not put the same energy into testing our own.

There are many students who have experiences we relate to, but as professionals we sometimes hide who we are behind our positions and lose the human connection needed to be impactful advisors. I know their feelings of success. But my story is filled with their challenges also. None of us are immune to the ills of the world. Our students need to know that we know and want to help them push and strive the way we have. We can be the fighters and advocates they need, inside and out.

My life has taught me there is a time and place for everything, and it all happens in order for lessons to be learned. I have also come to know, firsthand, how the power of redemption and self-discovery can change lives for the better. I believe in my heart that I have an obligation to use what I have learned to help others achieve their own goals. I only keep what I have in this life by giving it away.

Jess Turuc

University of Utah

Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Here it is – my not-so-guilty "guilty" pleasure is that I watch the Real Housewives of all cities. I watch them all. I do this weekly - almost religiously. I enjoy it and I know I'm not the only one. The Bravo franchise is something I've grown addicted to. I started watching the Real Housewives of Orange County (the OGs) in 2006. It was something I stumbled upon and I was hooked. I was intrigued by the affluent lifestyle, the "friendships," and of course the drama of these older women.

I know what some of you are thinking – "Jess, you can't be serious? How does this connect to being an FSA? How does this drive or support your work?" Yes, I recognize these shows glamorize women who at times are superficial. Looking past the lavish lifestyles – plastic surgery, energy healers, glam squads, vacations, etc. – the show made a shift recently to focus more on the relational side of the women's lives and from being less about glamour and price tags to more about who they are and how they connect with others.

So here are some of the parallels between our work and the Real Housewives franchise. There are some relationships that are "manufactured" and forced for the sake of the show. I won't fight you on that. However, it's fascinating to watch these cast members connect to each other. This is similar to some versions of recruitment into our organizations. We watch prospective/aspirant/new members join organizations for the experience and with hopes they will make friends. We know some will make friendships that last a lifetime, some will not, and some will form "frien-emies." However, what we learn from the show and in our fraternal experiences, is that it's important to nurture those friendships and be open to new ones. We also learn how to confront others, be realistic a friendship might not work, and that we have to be able to co-exist. Sometimes our students and the cast members handle this with grace and maturity, but often they do not and there are lessons to learn from that. For example, when you're frustrated, flipping a table is not a great way to express your feelings.

The cast members have seemingly perfect lives. However, they are like you and I. They're trying to keep it all together and

maintain the façade but really they go through real issues like business woes, being mansplained to, relationship difficulties, infertility issues, passing of loved ones, financial issues, striving to be strong and independent women, and much more.

As I watch their testimonies, I'm reminded of one-on-one conversations I've had with student leaders. They care, they're trying, and they face challenges all while trying to uphold a certain image that society expects of them. The cast members and our students are human and we all deal with things. Petty fights and drama are synonymous with this franchise. While it is ridiculous and entertaining, it is a reflection of humanity. As professionals, we want our students to "do better" and "move past the drama" but we, and they, are constantly surrounded by it. Through the drama, I have learned several witty, sassy responses and "clapbacks" I use as I work with students to get them to pay attention and help coach them in their leadership roles. Don't at me – it's ok to use some sass in the work we do. This is just the tip of the iceberg. There's much more to psychoanalyze. Each Real Housewives city has a different vibe, just like each fraternity/sorority on our campuses and attracts certain folks to membership. While the show can be entertaining, there's a good bit to learn from the Real Housewives as it can relate to our students. In my best Real Housewives voice, "To learn more about the Housewives, go to BravoTV.com."

Huong Truong

University of Missouri

Graduate Assistant for Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life

I am a first generation Vietnamese-Chinese American student. As a current graduate student studying to be a student affairs professional, it is difficult to explain to my refugee and immigrant parents what I do. Neither of them speak English fluently nor did they attend college. In particular, it is hard to explain to them what I do advising students in fraternity and sorority life and why this work matters. I distinctly remember the annoying, heartbreaking feeling of not being able to tell my parents why I joined my sorority (or even what it is), how my sisters have helped me throughout college, and why I decided to go to graduate school. There are no words in Vietnamese for fraternity or sorority. When I joined my organization as an undergraduate, I had to parallel my experience in the sorority to that of my Buddhist youth group days. Even then, it did not do my experience justice. For years, I have struggled with telling my parents why I wear my letters, what I do in my organization, and about the students I advise. I also know I am not alone in this struggle.

Many sorority sisters and students whose parents do not speak English as their first language also toil to explain fraternity and sorority life. This inspired a personal idea to create a handout in multiple languages that translates and explains what my own sorority does. This is a work in progress and an idea I hope will come to fruition within the next few years. For now, I tell my parents that my job involves helping college students stay in school and navigate their lives on campus. My parents were simply glad I found a home away from home. I am excited to find a way to merge my two worlds together so my family can understand why I love my job. More importantly, I am excited to finally properly tell my parents what I do for a living so they can tell everyone. That is what my parents love to do – brag about their kids. Afterall, I would not be here today without them and the sacrifices they made fleeing their homeland to ensure my siblings and I can have these experiences.

Their sacrifices are what I am reminded of when I put on my letters. Hopefully, I will find the right words to tell them why one day.

Chase Oatis

University of Maryland - College Park

Diversity & Inclusion Graduate Coordinator

"My name is Chase, I use they/them and he/him pronouns, and I am a member of Tri Sigma, a PHA sorority."

This statement is always met with squints and stares, brains operating in overdrive to understand how that entire sentence could be possible. You see, I am genderqueer and trans masculine and joined my organization when I thought I was a woman; in fact, I did not realize my gender until right before graduation.

Flashback to fall 2014 – I was meeting with one of the Tri Sigma consultants tasked with establishing the chapter on my campus. "But can I wear pants? Can I be out as gay?" This was my only concern. I'd watched my friends grow and thrive in sororities, and I wanted that. But I needed to be able to be myself. Her definitive yes and the representation of an openly queer person employed at the National Headquarters was convincing enough, so I accepted my bid. The Theta Zeta chapter of Tri Sigma changed my life. I became a leader and was introduced to student affairs, but most importantly, began to discover my full self.

Today, I am working in fraternity and sorority life and promoting diversity and inclusion within our community. It is extremely contradictory for me to be a nonbinary person operating in the binary system that is fraternity and sorority life, yet here I am. I believe fraternities and sororities can be incredibly powerful tools for support and self-discovery, but only if the right culture exists. Conversely, they can be repressive, causing individuals to hide and hate themselves until they leave that environment.

This is why I am here, living loudly and openly as myself in the binary world. I am here for the other people like me, the ones discovering themselves during their time in their chapter, or even because of it. Being nonbinary is to be impossible, to live beyond the cisgenderist system, but I do it every day. I am here, performing the work I do, to be a light for my queer and trans Greek siblings not yet aware of themselves or able to share themselves with others.

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PASSING AS GOLD

DR. KIM MONTEAUX DE FREITAS

On a cold wintery night, somewhere between Madison and the Northwoods of Wisconsin, my life changed within seconds. On this particular evening, an invisible layer of ice — most commonly known as black ice — took my control of the wheel while going 70 mph and flung me into a metal guard rail faster than I knew what happened. Yet while this happened, I remember holding on tight and praying. Moments flashed through my mind and I couldn't help but close my eyes similarly to when fear takes over on a roller coaster.

Upon opening my eyes, the four-lane highway looked like a multiple-car crash scene from a movie. All I could do was cry. Walking from my vehicle, feeling the stiffness in my body, I noticed I was feet away from a bridge. Everyone who had been in the accident was alive and for the most part, meeting up on the side of the road. When the emergency response team showed up all I remember is being in a neck brace and the EMT telling me I was lucky to be walking.

As much as the accident was traumatic, it was the events that followed I remember most, and that even impacted my life both personally and professionally. Waiting to leave the ER, while sitting on a green bench, a family came in: a father, a mother, and a son. The son, who was probably around ten, kept saying how he wanted his father to come in sooner and he knew something was wrong. The father responded he thought he would be alright, while the mother did not say much at all. The receptionist asked a question that stopped my heart for a moment, "What is your insurance provider?" The response was all too familiar to me, "We don't have any insurance."

During this moment in the ER I met my new social class identity. My understanding of who I was as a professional collided with my humble beginnings. I realized the ambulance ride bill wasn't going into the drawer in my parent's kitchen to collect dust, be put on a payment plan, or be marked past due. I realized there wasn't a bill anymore. I realized I didn't have to fear not having a working vehicle as my insurance would cover the damages to the car. The pain of realizing what I had grown up knowing and where I was as a higher education professional with excellent benefits and a salary was powerful and, in some ways, more painful than the car accident. This is the day I understood my class of origin was not how I navigated the world anymore, and I started asking myself more questions as a way to heal and grow.

Let me be clear: telling my own story as a first generation college graduate from rural Wisconsin has been challenging in many fraternity and sorority environments. Attending college in the early 2000s, conversations about differences were few and far between. I distinctly remember when a chapter sister shared at a retreat she was from a poor area in lower Michigan, hanging on her every word as she talked about her family worrying about money for utilities and if her mom could afford to come for mother's weekend. That was the first time I felt I could really relate to one of my chapter sisters, and I am still grateful for her vulnerability.

While I have no doubt my undergraduate sorority membership contributed negatively to my identity development as someone from a working class/working poor family, it also provided me unlimited opportunities that contributed to my educational, cultural, social, and understanding of economic capital. My first flight was to attend a sorority convention where I also attended my first etiquette class. While to some this would not be life-changing, for me navigating spaces with my "sisters" left me feeling like I was not enough, and it also provided skills that contributed to my covering, passing, and exhausting upward mobility journey.

THIS IS THE DAY I UNDERSTOOD MY CLASS OF ORIGIN WAS NOT HOW I NAVIGATED THE WORLD ANYMORE, AND I STARTED ASKING MYSELF MORE QUESTIONS AS A WAY TO HEAL AND GROW.

This idea of covering was first introduced to me in graduate school and I later read, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* by Kenji Yoshino.[1] Yoshino provided me with language to reflect on how I was feeling in different spaces, whom I shared my true story with, and provided permission for how I was struggling with not being my true self in all spaces.

Today I will name becoming a full-time professional in fraternity and sorority life was a rough part of my class journey. Individuals immediately assumed I came from a family with more than enough and each time I did not correct them I felt guilt for days. In the book, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*,[2] Alfred Lubrano shares a personal story of being a kid from a working-class background who now identifies as middle class. This idea of Lubrano's straddling of two worlds is something I experience frequently and has been painful throughout my education and career. I am aware I pass as someone who grew up with more than enough. That is not my story.

This fraternity woman knows what it is like to grow up in a household without a car, to have family members be incarcerated, and to overhear family worry about unpaid bills. I know the simple joys of living in the residence hall, never having to worry about heat. I'm the person who paid

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1 **Yoshino, K. (2006).** Covering: The hidden assault on our civil rights.

2 **Lubrano, A. (2004).** Limbo: Blue-collar roots, white-collar dreams. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

for membership dues years later as they were paid in full with student loans.

I also know what it is like to go back to my beloved childhood town and be asked, "Why are you talking like that?" and not feel welcome in spaces where others perceive I think I am better than them. I have a deep understanding of the cost associated with having more, yet feeling pushed further away from my beginnings.

This last academic year I had the honor of presenting at the AFA Annual Meeting and the NASPA Annual Conference on the intersections of social class and fraternity and sorority membership. For over a decade, my heart still races when I present on this topic. No matter the location, conference theme, or demographics of attendees, there are always a few courageous individuals — often with shaking voices and wells in their eyes — who time and time again voice their truths with a sense of pride as they share where they are from and their journey with class issues.

> I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF STORYTELLING TO SHARE WHERE WE HAVE BEEN, WHERE WE ARE, AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR HOPE FOR TOMORROW.

Young professionals share predictable, but nonetheless important, experiences of jam-packed hotel rooms, the feeling less-than, the not knowing how to dress, and travel costs as they embark on their first professional conferences. A mid-level professional even shared a story of food insecurity and how they were depending on the receptions to eat until Friday when they got paid. Stories of price tags being kept on suits with hopes of an easy return once the conference was over. Memories of living in a hotel when they started their first job due to not having enough savings to rent an apartment. Vulnerable moments with childhood stories of losing homes, living with family members, abuse, and painful moments children should never have to experience due to class.

When I leave these presentations, I leave with a sense of wholeness and hope. Hope that individuals will continue to have the strength to share their stories, hope that we can advocate for one another, and hope that social class conversations will continue and elevate in our profession while contributing to change. I am also filled with gratitude when others boldly and unknowingly impact the lives in the room and shape the way we do our work moving forward.

Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, president and founder of the Washington Consulting Group as well as a founder of the Social Justice Training Institute, shares frequently that we need to do our own work first before really being able to do the work for others (i.e. our students). Many I have mentored, in return, have mentored me with sharing their truths as a path to self-understanding. These conversations have sometimes been intentional and other times naturally flowing. Making space for one another to share our class stories contributes to our understanding of who makes up this field and provides opportunities to appreciate one another.

I believe in the power of storytelling to share where we have been, where we are, and to contribute to our hope for tomorrow. Our untold stories and experiences help inform job searches, onboarding, transitioning, and retention of talent. It is my hope that we as professionals commit to starting, or continuing, to explore, engage, and encourage conversations around class. We can start with our own stories, no matter what the path may look or feel like. We can find pride in our differences and work to breakdown the "illusion of inclusion"[3] our field often contributes to.

My beginnings are not unique to other members in our association and just like many of us, were initiated with a gold-clad badge that we too are passing. The invisibleness of social class is real and it exists unseen within the committees we serve, the individual you sit next to, or even your new supervisee. When we better understand how social class impacts our own stories, we can start to better connect with how social class impacts the stories around us.

Dr. Kim Monteaux De Freitas

Dr. Kim Monteaux De Freitas is a proud first-generation college graduate from the Northwoods of Wisconsin. Kim is the Director of Sorority and Fraternity Life at The Ohio State University. Over the last fifteen years, Kim has volunteered for various organizations including the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and her fraternity Phi Sigma Sigma.

[3] Coined by Patricia Pope in 1990.

EVEN IF YOU IN A BENZ, YOU STILL A N****A IN A COUPE

HAILEY M. MANGRUM

I wanted nothing to do with black people my freshman year of college. I thought it would hinder my success. Operating out of my own internalized racial oppression, my mindset was simple – the more white people in my network, the closer I was to success. The new me is literally cringing while writing this. But this story is important. This was my belief attending a historically white institution as a 16-year old Black woman.

One day, someone asked me and my friends if we were attending a student organization meeting for Black women on campus. I responded, "Oh, probably not. That sounds like segregating yourself." Looking back on this, I was assimilating — striving for whiteness. I was also perpetuating the idea of the "good/uppity negro" — a notion that depicts Black people serving in leadership capacities as presenting themselves as better than Black people they perceive not to be on their level. In that moment, I othered my own race with a "me versus them" mindset instead of viewing the situation with an "us" mindset.

I was often the only one in these spaces. The only Black one, that is. I was involved with campus organizations that were over-resourced in funding, and I was always invited to serve as a student representative at meetings with high-level community leaders and administrators. During one meeting in particular, a Black board of trustees member pulled me aside to offer advice on how to act so I could be successful. In other words, he wanted to ensure I knew the instructions for playing the game … the instructions for assimilating to whiteness.

The way I internally oppressed my racial identity without realizing it was so natural — yet dangerous — during this period of my life. As a young student suffering from a combination of imposter syndrome and the effort needed to grasp hold of my Black identity, I was slowly but surely becoming part of the system. At the time, I thought it was an accomplishment to be the only Black student in a university-wide committee meeting, student group, or leadership board. I honestly thought I had "made it" because I was often the only person of color in the room. I was reluctant to realize I was a token and only granted access because I was one of the "good ones."

All Eyes on Me

During my first semester of graduate school, we were assigned to read an article titled "After Ferguson, Some Black Academics Wonder: Does Pursuing a Ph.D. Matter?" In typical graduate school fashion, we split into small groups to discuss our initial thoughts, takeaways, and questions to consider. As the only Black woman in

the program — and only Black student in that specific class — I decided I was going to stay silent as long as possible. I was tired of constantly having to educate those around me on the experiences of Black students. Yet of course, I was in a group with the professor and silence was not an option.

While in discussion, the professor shared they could not understand the connection between educational attainment and race. The intersection of the two concepts just didn't resonate with them. In response, I shared the article really resonated with me as I was the only Black woman in the program. The professor stated, "Wow, I didn't even realize. I wish you were here last year ..." and started to name all of the Black students in the program the previous year rather than reflect upon why there's a lack of representation in the program.

I was distraught. My classmates' remarks were even more disheartening during the discussion. The way folks stumbled while sharing their perspectives, the awkward moments of silence ... almost as if all eyes were on me, waiting for me to speak. This made me uneasy. Was I really pursuing a career in a field that didn't understand my experience? Were these the future professionals supposed to support students that look like me?! This moment was transformational because I realized my experience was different from the majority of my peers.

The environment I was in did not include nor support the narrative of my lived experience. I strongly considered transferring until I found an affinity space with other Black graduate students and young professionals. This small group became my family away from home. I learned how to make sense of police brutality in the wake of Ferguson because of others' intriguing perspectives. I was able to understand the intersections of race and gender as we analyzed episodes of "Scandal" every Thursday night. I developed a confidence in expressing my Blackness authentically because of these eight individuals, and I survived graduate school because of the support, guidance, and sense of community they provided.

Always Work Twice as Hard

My parents always taught me I had no choice but to work twice as hard just to be considered half as good as my white peers. Amanda Seales jokes about this ideology in her stand up comedy. She jokes Black folks not only have songs we consider cultural anthems because we all know the lyrics, but we also need to know popular songs within white culture. This survival tactic is a skill many professionals of color develop to advance within their fields. This concept is no different within the fraternity and sorority industry. When applying for my first job within fraternity and sorority life, I knew I would not be offered a job if I did not understand or speak the language of Panhellenic and IFC. I distinctly remember researching Panhellenic sorority recruitment and studying NPC processes, so I could articulate them just as well as my own council affiliation.

This disparity is a simple form of privilege. The luxury of only knowing about your culture and not having to know about the cultures of those around you is privilege at best. Our industry allows professionals to advance in opportunities, receive acknowledgements, and serve in leadership capacities with little to no experience or understanding of fraternities and sororities that are culturally based. Because of this, members of organizations in NAPA, NALFO, NMGC, and NPHC are often taxed to educate not only students but also other professionals without adequate compensation or advancement. The competency gap around culturally-based organizations is just another microcosm of my experiences related to racial identity.

I'm Black and I'm Proud

Kanye West's lyric "Even if you in a Benz, you still a n***a in a coupe"[2] is a direct callout to the mindset I had during the beginning stages of my Black identity development. I believed as my influence, power, and success increased, I wouldn't be subject to racism, discrimination, or inequitable systems. It was a tough lesson to realize no matter what I achieved or how much power I attained, I am still Black. I am still subject to the same systems, discrimination, and oppression as any other Black person, regardless of the accomplishments on my resume.

Through a societal lens, I am Black first. Ultimately, it does not matter how well I speak, how much money I make, or how nicely I dress — I'm still a descendent of people brought to this country against their own will that have been oppressed since arriving. I am hyper-aware of my identity and surroundings now that I fully understand Kanye's lyrics. For example:

> I fear for my life when driving on the highway or through small towns, and I only do so if it is daylight and I have a full tank of gas.
>
> I am careful not to put my hands in my pockets when I enter stores to ensure I am not accused of stealing. My parents taught me this lesson.
>
> My heart still skips a beat when I see a police car or police officer.
>
> I will forever carry the wisdom of my dad saying, "The only thing you have to do is stay black and die."

[1] Patton, S. (2014, September 12). After Ferguson, Some Black Academics Wonder: Does Pursuing a Ph.D. Matter. The Chronicle. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from https://chroniclevitae.com/news/703-after-ferguson-some-black-academics-wonder-does-pursuing-a-ph-d-matter

All of these scenarios reiterate that although I have accomplished much for my age, I can never forget to the world I am still a "n***a."

The word "n***a" is complex. Even though I have and still use this term when communicating in-group, the word itself makes people feel uncomfortable on all ends of the spectrum. I feel this same discomfort when I am the only Black woman in the room, or when I have to choose between laughing at an inappropriate joke and educating the person that made it. At times when I think I can hide my racial identity through code switching and playing the game, I realize I'm actually further perpetuating the idea of anti-blackness … perpetuating the concept that if I dress nicely, speak well (whatever that actually means), and essentially look the part, my Blackness will not hinder me.

I once asked my 15-year-old brother what his favorite quality about me is. He said, "You love that you are Black and you are proud of it." Little did he know, just 10 years ago I wanted nothing to do with my racial identity. I went from not wanting to be with people that looked like me during my freshman year of college to intentionally seeking out affinity spaces in graduate school. Becoming proud of my racial identity required me to understand the socio-historical perspective of what it means to be Black. Understanding this perspective enables me to better advise students, engage in meaningful conversations around race, and advocate for people who maintain identities different from my own.

Our Stories Matter

The experiences I encountered substantially increased my knowledge, pride, and understanding of my racial identity. I often consider my story when attempting to understand those around me. Our lived experiences are the lenses through which we see and the compass that guides our decisions as we navigate the world. Ultimately, the lessons we learn from life's circumstances are what shape how we make sense of our lives. As human beings, we have a responsibility to understand one another's experiences because our stories matter.

My friends dragged me to that meeting freshman year and I served on the executive board until I became president. Looking back, that organization was the first sisterhood I encountered. It was my home — the only space I could be truly authentic.

That was many years ago. Take that experience as a starting point and jump ahead to today … I am unapologetically proud to be a Black woman now more than ever.

I once asked my 15-year-old brother what his favorite quality about me is.

He said,

" You love that you are Black and you are proud of it. "

Hailey Mangrum

Hailey Mangrum currently serves as an Assistant Director for Leadership Development within the office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Virginia Tech and as a Culturally-Based Fraternal Growth Consultant with Phired Up Productions. As a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, she is dedicated to social justice, advocacy, and increasing cultural competence within the industry. Hailey has a passion for creating spaces and opportunities in which people can make meaning of their multifaceted identities.

[2] West, K. (2004). All falls down. On The college dropout[CD]. Rock-A-Fella Records.

DR. KEVIN SNYDER

SCARS ARE BEAUTIFUL

Last year, I wrote an article titled, "Few Talk, Many Affected: My Story With Sexual Assault," revealing I was a victim of sexual assault nearly 20 years ago while traveling as a fraternity leadership consultant. The person who assaulted me was a chapter advisor I viewed as a mentor. I was 23 years old and believe he was in his late forties.

The assault took place during one of my consultant visits roughly 1,000 miles away from our headquarters. This alumnus lived in the area I was visiting and invited me to his house for dinner. What began as an invitation to grill tuna steaks on his pool deck ended up being a horrific night forever engraved in my memory.

As I wrote the article, I was uncertain and nervous about how my message would be received — not just by readers that do not know me but also by colleagues, friends, and family. What would they think?

At the time of the attack, I had never heard of a man being sexually assaulted by another man. I felt embarrassed, ashamed, angry, disgusted, weak, naive, and confused all at once. I felt weak for not being strong enough to protect myself. I felt naive for going to his house in the first place. I felt everything was my fault.

Since I didn't want anyone to know, I also felt alone. My self-imposed social stigma was powerful enough to silence me.

Last year, nearly 20 years later, I finally decided it was time to speak out. I was inspired by students willing to share their stories of adversity and trauma after I spoke on their campuses. I was compelled to write the article in hopes of providing a seemingly absent male survivor voice to the mainstream media discourse about sexual assault. In my article I shared why I waited so long to reveal the incident and why I could not remember certain details. I also shared insights about how to support survivors and play a role in helping prevent assault from occurring.

My story did not end the day I was assaulted, nor did it end when I decided to post last year's article. My story still continues and I hope my story never ends because I desire to use my experience for good and to help others.

I have never wanted to relive what happened that night. However, the process of writing and rewriting the article forced me to mentally go back to that evening and dig up what I had buried for almost twenty years. As I relived the pain, I realized I had not yet fully processed my assault experience. I always thought by not talking about it, I could eventually forget about it.

I have now come to terms with the reality that I will never be able to forget what happened. I cannot change it. I cannot erase the experience - and that is OK. To find meaning and purpose out of a tragedy and not let it break you is powerful in itself.

This is especially important to me now as my wife and I are expecting our first child — a girl. Conversations have arisen between us about what we will do to protect our child from sexual assault, and how we might react if such an experience ever happens. I cringe thinking about such a possibility.

This newfound realization empowers me to feel free and embrace my experience to use it with purpose like never before. I refuse to allow this assault to define my life or for it to be a part of me that I try to hold back. An interesting perspective I have discovered is my sexual assault experience has actually led me to where I am today.

I did not tell my parents about being sexually assaulted. They never knew what happened until I talked with them before the publication of last year's article. Although they were deeply saddened, they understood why I hid the truth back then, and they applauded me, with tears in their eyes, for using my voice now.

My parents are both amazing educators in their own ways; my mom a math teacher and my dad a preacher. My entire life I have seen them live selflessly to help and serve others.

Likewise, those of us who are, or have been, student affairs and fraternity/sorority professionals, exhibit a similar service and dedication. There is a reason we work with students and a reason we want to help foster exceptional collegiate experiences. Whatever differences we have in our reasons, there is an underlying factor that all of us want to be of service in some way.

The reason I desired to work in student affairs was because I wanted to help students who struggled like me. I only applied to one college because I thought I would not be accepted elsewhere. When I arrived on campus, I kept my bags packed. I did not expect to make it. I felt like an imposter. Adding salt to the wound, my roommate and I had nothing in common, and I was in a long distance relationship. I nearly hated my first year of college.

When I joined my fraternity, things changed. I transformed. I felt a sense of belonging. Little did I know my fraternal decision would open up invisible doors leading me to entirely new and exciting destinations. Since college I've worked on four different campuses, earned a doctorate degree, written a few books, and become a full-time professional speaker. I would not be where I am today if it were not for my past experiences — most importantly, the junk. Even my worst mistakes and most tragic experiences were formative in leading me to where I am today.

As a speaker and author, I have been gifted with a platform to communicate with an audience. As such, I feel a duty to use my experiences to help others work through low points and celebrate high points in their lives and to realize tragedy can evolve into triumph when used for good. I aim to help others move forward like I did and help some feel not so alone, unlike how I felt. By doing this, I give purpose and meaning to all the junk from my past.

> If my story can help even one person, then it has rippled.
>
> It has been given purpose because I made a choice to give it purpose.

I believe any negative scar from the past can be redefined and given useful purpose, but in order to do so, it requires us to view that experience in a different paradigm.

Many of us have physical scars and when possible, we hide them with our clothes.

Many of us have emotional scars, and we hide them by silencing our voices.

My intent for writing this is to plant a new paradigm — a seed — in your mind that by sharing our stories of struggle, we help others find strength. You will be amazed what grows when you plant this seed.

By revealing our mistakes, we teach others lessons of wisdom.

By disclosing moments of tragedy and loneliness, we help others feel not so alone.

We all yearn to feel connected, to feel a sense of belonging, and to feel like we matter and make a difference. By sharing our scars of experience, we help others realize they also have voices.

From my experience working in student affairs and speaking at more than 400 campuses and 1,000+ professional organizations across the country, I have engaged in thousands of conversations with students and professionals. I am convinced if we all did a better job connecting with others, we would look at ourselves differently, would look at each other differently, and would connect differently.

We best connect with others by sharing our stories, not by hiding them. Not only would we solve challenges differently, but fewer challenges would arise because we would develop a heightened sense of empathy for each other. We teach empathy by showing it.

When I was an academic advisor, dozens of students were in and out of my office every day. I was usually able to provide quick solutions, and then I would take a few extra moments to ask how they were doing, twice.

The first time I would ask how they were doing I would commonly receive an automatic "fine" or "OK" response.

Interestingly, the second time I asked how they were doing, I often received a completely different answer. This was the real answer. And for the next several minutes, I would listen to them share stories about issues, frustrations, and even tragic experiences they were silently dealing with. Empathy became our bond.

This was the type of connection that seemed to make all the difference in the world to them. Of the five advisors in our department, I was the one with the busiest appointment schedule — and I loved it. Students were searching for connection and transparency rather than academic advising.

So here is a thought … the next time you meet with a student — or anyone for that matter — consider asking the same question twice. You will likely get a completely different answer the second time. It will be the real answer, and the one you should really be talking about. In that moment, a powerful connection will be made.

Taking this a step further, the next time you need to share data reports, release a new policy or procedure, or simply share an important update, consider revealing why that information really matters. Provide a supporting example to provide context.

The most important realization I have discovered through my speaking is that stories trump statistics 100 percent of the time. Strength trumps struggle as well.

Scars are beautiful when we view them in that paradigm and give them purpose when we use them to help others. They are reminders of things that have happened. You cannot change them but you can use them for good.

When I decided to share my story, I had no idea how people would react. Would they understand why I was sharing my scar of being sexually assaulted? As I clicked the submit button to post my article to the world, I braced myself. I expected negative backlash. I prepared to receive emails telling me I was politicizing, that I was a man and would not understand, and that I should just shut up and stay quiet. I prepared for it.

None of that happened. There were no angry phone calls, nasty emails, or divisive social media posts.

Instead, I was surprised to be overwhelmed by an enormously positive response — mostly through quiet direct messages no one would ever know about except me. Even more surprisingly, the majority of responses came from other men, many of whom also experienced sexual assault and had never revealed it.

Mother Teresa said, "I cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone that will create a ripple." There is a way for all of us to create a ripple that can impact others. Making your scars useful does not make a tragic experience go away, but it will connect with and help others. If my story can help even one person, then it has rippled. It has been given purpose because I made a choice to give it purpose. Last year after presenting my "Few Talk, Many Affected" keynote program at a campus, a young man approached me and bravely shared he too had experienced sexual assault. We spoke for a few moments then and have spoken several times since. I was beyond thrilled to recently hear he is applying to graduate school to become a mental health counselor. This young man is going to create some serious ripple.

So what about you? Are you ready to spread a ripple?

For nearly 20 years, I hid the most traumatic experience of my life. I never let it out. I hid it from my students, family, best friends, and even my wife. Yet when I shared the story, I discovered the most powerful connection to others I had ever experienced.

What story have you shared recently with someone? What story will you share?

Writing my first article was difficult. This one even tougher. It has not been easy, and it will not be for you either. However, I assure you it will be worth it.

Scars carry our most powerful voice. We can use them in a positive way as they inform who we are and who we continue to become. By sharing the stories behind them, we connect with others like never before, and build connections and empathy.

So my charge to you is this … cast a stone by sharing your story. Use it for good.

If we do this with our students, alumni, and colleagues, they will do the same with each other. Your story makes your scars beautiful, and sharing your story creates your ripple.

Dr. Kevin Snyder

To reach Dr. Snyder or to read his initial article, visit *www.kevincsnyder.com/blog-posts*.

Dr. Kevin Snyder earned his doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Central Florida and his master's in Student Affairs from the University of South Carolina. Campuses he has worked at include University of Central Florida, University of South Carolina, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, High Point University, and Wake Tech Community College.

TRACY MAXWELL

TAKING THE LEAP

All my life I have felt inadequate – like I didn't quite fit in.

I don't talk about it much, and when I do, people always express surprise. The truth is, I would rather be seen as someone who has it all together – someone getting stuff done. So I would push through the self-doubt and forge ahead into what has become a rewarding journey.

I founded a non-profit and have received numerous awards for my work with hazing prevention, and I have been a professional speaker and consultant on the topic for the past seven years. I've appeared in the media including ESPN, CBS, the New York Times, the "Katie Couric Show," and countless others commenting on hazing. Outside of higher education, I have gained notoriety in the young adult cancer community. I speak at conferences and published a book about being single with cancer. This has led to television, radio, and print pieces about my experiences with a rare form of ovarian cancer. I have tried to turn every success and setback into an opportunity to make a positive impact.

I am happy with where I have ended up in my career. However, I'm not sure I ever knew exactly what path I should be taking within this field. Many of my successes have been motivated by a desire to gain external validation to make me feel better about myself.

EARLY CAREER

This impacted the start of my professional journey. The newer professionals in our field are often the most involved, and I was no exception. My path began as a consultant for both my own sorority and the NIC/NPC for two years after college. I then took my first job on a campus. Those four years I worked an average of 60+ hours a week overseeing fraternities and sororities and starting a new community service program. I also served on two committees for my international sorority and earned a master's degree. I volunteered for both the Order of Omega and AFA. I was nominated for the AFA board twice, but declined because I did not feel like I was ready. However, I did receive the outstanding volunteer award for my AFA committee chairmanship. I also helped found an Alpha Omicron Pi alumnae chapter in the area, did occasional speaking on the side, and facilitated UIFI every summer.

I covered my insecurities by pouring myself into my work. I did not have much of a life and rarely dated or hung out with friends outside of colleagues. I spent all my vacation time visiting family and friends who lived far away. It was not a sustainable path.

DENVER WILL BE DIFFERENT

I decided to give six months notice to my current employer, and let them know I would be leaving when I completed my master's degree in the spring even though I had no idea what I was going to do next. I was thrilled when some friends started a new company called CAMPUSPEAK and asked me to move to Colorado to work for the agency.

As I approached my move to Denver, I made a vow to myself that I would make more time for friends and fun. Working a job with regular hours certainly helped. I immediately joined my sorority alumnae group and connected with friends of friends. I took some fun classes like wine and chocolate tasting and pasta making. I joined an outdoor volunteer group and helped build a hiking trail one weekend. After waking up to snow on my tent in September during that trail building weekend, I decided I needed to get some outdoor training for this new environment. So I took a mountaineering class. The Rockies are no joke! I had grown up on a huge lake in Kentucky and really missed the water. When locals told me Colorado had water – it was moving – I got into paddling and eventually became a guide, taking customers on multi-day canoe trips down several western rivers. Life became more balanced. I had an active life with good friends and a vibrant city to explore. I even found time for dating.

I did maintain some connections to student life by advising for the Alpha Omicron Pi chapter at University of Colorado Boulder and the occasional facilitation opportunity like UIFI. I was not as driven to be involved on so many levels. I recognized that my "busyness" was still largely stemming from a desire to feel important and needed. I enjoyed those eight years with CAMPUSPEAK, taking on a different role every 18 months or so, until finally becoming the CEO for my final two years. A year into being CEO I was diagnosed with cancer, which ultimately led to my departure.

ON MY OWN

I worked full time through my cancer treatment for a couple of reasons. A small company cannot really afford to have one of its few employees take a leave of absence, and I needed my job for the health insurance. Really, it never occurred to me not to continue working. Being single and living alone, I think it would have driven me crazy to be at home staring at my four walls all day. It was much better to be productive and surrounded by people. Facing your own mortality tends to give you a new perspective, and six months after treatment ended, I knew it was time to leave. I gave several months notice and again did not know what I was going to do next.

When I was 12 years old, I started working for my parents in their gift and t-shirt shop in the tourist town where I grew up. I had not really taken a summer "off" since then, so when I left CAMPUSPEAK in April, I decided against looking for a job right away. Instead, I lived off my savings for four months, went to some festivals, guided a lot of river trips, took a hot air balloon ride with a friend during a week in Santa Fe, drove up the Pacific Coast Highway for six weeks, and went sea kayaking in the San Juan Islands. Throughout my adventures, I visited old friends and made new ones everywhere I could.

In the middle of my summer of adventure, my path would take another turn due to a call from the owners of CAMPUSPEAK. I had started and run several anti-hazing initiatives a few years before, and they wanted to know if I was interested in taking them over. Though everyone felt this focus was important, a small company cannot afford to take on programming that does not make money, and we all felt this would be better as a non-profit.

HazingPrevention.Org was born the day after Labor Day 2007 and operated out of my living room for five years. With the support of many sponsoring organizations, a great group of volunteers, board members, and the occasional unpaid intern, my life once again skewed more toward work. I was the sole employee of this new organization, and as a colleague pointed out, the only person in the world getting paid to do full-time hazing prevention work at that time. Even though I was getting paid about half of my previous salary, I found something within myself through that work. I was passionate about hazing prevention — I still am — and very proud of what we created to address this important issue.

As I am prone to do, after five years of hard work and one cancer recurrence, I decided once again to leave this organization that I founded with no solid plan about supporting myself, but I knew I wanted to serve single cancer survivors somehow. I will never forget the date — June 3, 2013. That was my last day with HazingPrevention.Org, the day the final manuscript for my book "Being Single, With Cancer" was due to the publisher, and the day my oncologist called to tell me the cancer recurred for a second time and I would soon need surgery.

I had no job, no income, and no idea when I would feel up to doing anything following surgery. My friends stepped in and took control at this point and raised $30,000 in just a few days to support me and my healing. I will always be grateful for the generosity of my community that allowed me to spend a month that summer at a clinic in California specializing in alternative cancer treatment. It gave me the space I needed to heal, and it set a new relaxed pace for my life that helped me through another cancer recurrence this past summer.

A NEW ROLE

My professional journey continued in concert with my healing journey. I began a different role with CAMPUSPEAK as a speaker and consultant on hazing issues in the spring of 2012. I had never seen myself as a speaker. I express myself best in writing as that is where I am most comfortable. After running a hazing prevention organization and talking to the media, I knew I had something to say to students and professionals. I embraced the discomfort as I set out to share my commitment to hazing prevention.

As I have grown and developed, I find I have less of a need to seek busyness in my work and more of a need to seek purpose in everything I do. I have enjoyed traveling to campuses and speaking at conferences on hazing for the past seven years. I love the opportunity to spend multiple days on one campus getting to know the people and digging into their unique needs. This work has been hugely rewarding in one sense and incredibly discouraging in another. Students are still dying from hazing, and some days it does not feel as if we have made any progress at all. Yet, I see reason for optimism. I know hazing will not end until students themselves decide this behavior is no longer acceptable. Although, I have to say I have tremendous faith in the current generation of students that I see beginning to take the steps needed to get to that place.

A quote from an interview I did with the New York Times while attending the AFA Annual Meeting in 2017 was designated as "quote of the day" on December 17. I compared what was happening with sexual misconduct in the #MeToo movement to what I witnessed around hazing by saying, "There is definitely this moment in time where society is not willing to accept behavior that in the past has been acceptable."

Now I realize it is not just a moment, but a movement to a new future – one based on honoring the dignity of each individual. I love the new project from my dear friend Mike Dilbeck. "DignityU" promises to bring much to the hazing prevention conversation and to the behavior change that follows. We each deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and that is something I am willing to dedicate my life to in my future pursuits.

As I look back at the ups and downs – the positive impacts and the missed opportunities – I think I have had a unique journey. However, I don't think I am that unique.

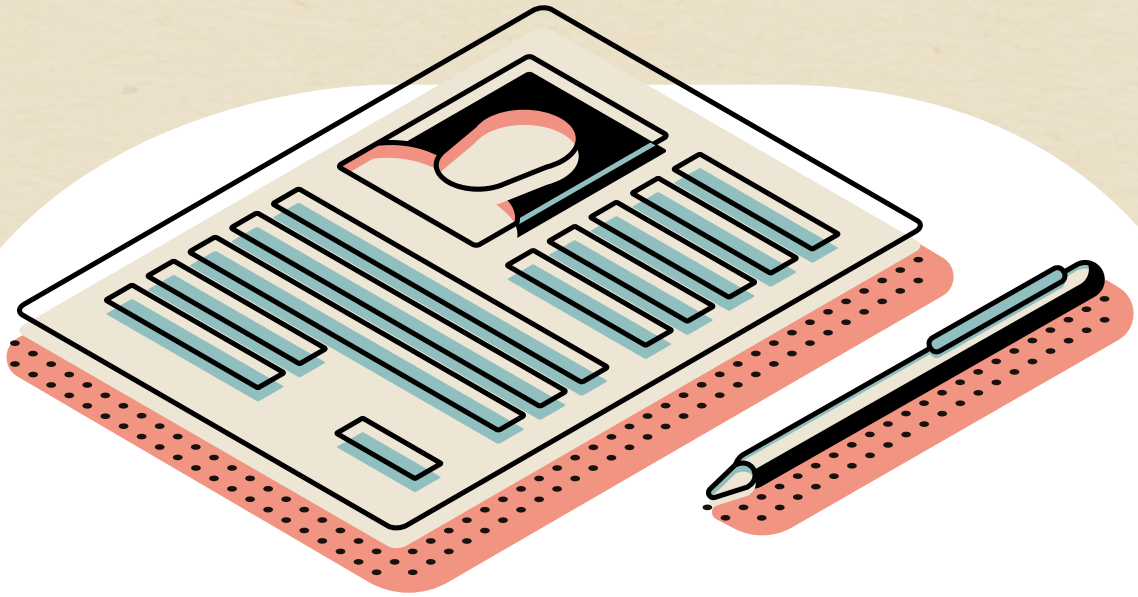
Several years ago, some colleagues and I submitted a program proposal for the Annual Meeting about fear. We created a panel discussion for professionals that identify as women to openly discuss what we were afraid of in our work and our lives. What followed was a vulnerable discussion with participants taking off their masks, letting down their walls, and sharing what kept them up at night. We talked about what made us feel like frauds, how fear held us back or encouraged us to overcompensate, and where we found the courage to overcome our fears and act anyway. The conversation was so powerful that it was repeated twice more at subsequent meetings with larger and larger attendance. Conversations like these allow us to be real without feeling like we must always put our best foot forward. Ultimately, we all long to show up authentically in our lives and to be seen for who we really are.

I have never quite fit in. Perhaps you haven't either. Maybe that is ok.

I have not followed a traditional path in this field or any part of my life really, but I have loved my career in student affairs. I also recognize it may be drawing to a close. I don't totally know what is coming next, but I am beginning to get that call again. It feels as if a beautiful chapter of my life may be coming to an end in order to birth whatever is next. As always, I welcome the challenge.

Tracy Maxwell

Tracy has worn many professional hats within higher education and outside of it. She believes there is no mandatory career path - just the one that is right for you.



This Is Not My First Career

A Case for Non-Traditional Hiring in Fraternity/Sorority Advising

Viancca Williams

When I was twenty years old, I served as chair of our university's Homecoming Committee. The committee's advisor paused in the middle of the meeting, looked at me, and said, "You need to do this." The "this" she meant was student affairs; that was the first time anyone suggested I consider working in this field. Following that encounter, a few other influential student affairs professionals in my life (including my fraternity/sorority advisor and the Dean of Students) reiterated the suggestion. The thought was appealing, but at the time, I was not economically or developmentally ready for graduate school or the field of student affairs. Additionally, I had my sights set on a particular prize: to land a full-time job with an amazing non-profit organization that helped develop me during high school and much of my college career. Throughout college, I worked for the organization part-time, creating training manuals and developing resources for the organization's programs. As I saw older peers I looked up to and learned from land full-time jobs with this organization, I was inspired to follow a similar path. The August after my graduation, my wish came to fruition.

In my first postgraduate career, I worked for a non-profit organization where I created and piloted two programs from the ground up. I also facilitated multiple programs focused on diversity, inclusion, and leadership development concepts for high school and middle school students as well as non-profit and for-profit organizations. This role gave me a wealth of knowledge I find myself using in my work as a fraternity and sorority advisor: strategic planning, budgeting, grant writing, outcomes assessment, volunteer management, mentoring skills and learning strategies. I also learned what it means to work for an organization strategically guided by a board of directors and operationally run by its employees, how to cultivate donor relations, and the effects the economy can have on operation. While I did not recognize it at the time, the parallels to higher education were uncanny.

Unfortunately, within a year, I was job searching as the post-September 11 world started to have its effect on the economy, and my position was eliminated due to lost funding. I found myself in a frenzy trying to make sure I was able to sustain myself, and I landed upon an interesting opportunity in the insurance industry. This role was another great pre-higher education boot camp, and I did not even realize it. While not lucrative, my time in corporate America taught me a few things: the importance of customer service and maintaining your cool in high stress situations, how to ask the right questions to understand the full

situation, how to listen for what is and is not said, how to manage time in tight deadlines, how to conduct thorough follow-up and close the loop, and how to balance the needs of your employer with the needs of your customer. The role also taught me how to be detail oriented with my work, to work in a team atmosphere, to effectively transition out of a position, to set the next person up for success, and how to bounce from one task to another while still finding time to complete the original task.

Yet something was missing. I found this role was not fulfilling me professionally; I wanted an opportunity to help people grow. I wanted to have a bigger — and more positive — impact on the world. Neither was happening from my cubicle or through my phone headset. I knew my time in the insurance industry was limited because I was not growing as a professional or maximizing my talents.

My path turned toward student affairs via a volunteer commitment as a chapter advisor for my sorority. A year after I graduated, my former chapter advisor called me with a request to work with a chapter that was in danger of closure and needed some additional support and motivation. I was excited about the possibility of empowering the members to take ownership of their experience and build a strong chapter.

Being an advisor provided everything I was lacking in my paid job. I used the skills I learned in my first career and infused others I learned in my second. Soon, I began to realize I looked forward to driving an hour and a half each Sunday to work with the women of that chapter. I would stay at the chapter house for 12 or 14 hours a day and completely lose track of time because I loved what I was doing. I began to dread getting up five days a week to go to my paid job. I knew something needed to change. At that point, the whispers I received my junior and senior years of college regarding the field of student affairs became my destiny. I applied to different programs and found myself with a graduate assistantship in fraternity and sorority life, which was exactly what I wanted.

Serving as a fraternity and sorority advisor has been the highlight of my professional life. I love the opportunity to help students grow and develop through this experience. I appreciate strategic planning, using data to make decisions, and trying to find new and improved ways of teaching different strategies and concepts to various stakeholders. I enjoy advocating for an experience that has made me into the woman I am today. I value the learning I have experienced during my time in the field. I can honestly say I love going to work.

However, I find myself criticizing our industry in one major way: are we hiring in the best way? Are we taking a holistic look at what the candidate can offer, or are we just using resumes as a checklist of fraternity and sorority life achievements that cater to a list of duties also known as a job description? To elevate the work we do while also improving retention of individuals doing this work, we need to rethink how, why, and who we hire.

When I made the decision to change careers, I recognized I had not followed a traditional path into this line of work. However, I felt confident I had prepared myself for this work. For example, by the time I was 17 I was serving as the co-chair of a community board that gave grants to young people doing projects to better their communities. In my early adult years, I was deeply involved in activism work in Washington, D.C., discussing juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and ways to engage young people in their communities. Years before my work as a fraternity and sorority advisor, I led large teams often comprised of individuals older than me, supported others in navigating crises, and successfully secured large sums of grant money to help create programs from the ground up. At the age of 25, I helped a chapter go from near closure to the most improved organization on their campus in the span of two years.

I remember being excited to interview for graduate assistantship roles in fraternity and sorority life, but feeling extremely disappointed when I discovered individuals that served as previous consultants were more likely to get these roles. The challenges continued when I was preparing to take the next step after graduate school. During the job search process in my second year of graduate school, I was caught off guard during a resume review when I was told, "These previous employment experiences are not transferable to a fraternity and sorority advisor role - why do you include them in your resume?"

I remember having to explain how each of those experiences was transferable. I also remember being afraid of highlighting the work I did in my other careers because I was afraid my resume would get overlooked if it was not fraternity and sorority heavy. I found when the emphasis of my resume was on fraternity and sorority life, it got overlooked less.

My personal journey gives me concern that as an industry we ignore valuable outside experiences. Can we consider how those experiences develop more innovative professionals that are better equipped to serve in fraternity and sorority advisor roles? Are we just hiring what we know and feel comfortable with? Do we also consider the part-time or leadership development experiences those we hire come with?

I believe these experiences along with the skills I learned in previous positions have contributed to my strengths and effectiveness as a fraternity and sorority advisor. I believe others like me get overlooked because they do not have "enough fraternity and sorority experience" when in fact

they can make our field stronger.

We should hire outside of the industry to evolve and breathe new life into our field and prevent us from becoming stagnant. Reasons to consider hiring from non-traditional paths include:

> Those who come from the outside can implement new ideas and provide a different lens – they breathe new life into programs, strategies, and initiatives.
>
> Critical feedback does not become personal – when someone with a different perspective calls attention to something, it creates an opportunity to pause and consider if a practice is necessary.
>
> New perspectives stop the recurrence of the same things happening repeatedly.
>
> It creates an opportunity for an organization to assess strengths and weaknesses as an operation and be more intentional about finding experts in missing or lacking areas.
>
> Individuals from outside the fraternity and sorority industry role model comfort with change and flexibility, which often lacks in an industry steeped in tradition and long-term influence.
>
> They can be the person you ask questions you may be afraid to ask – or back up the feelings you already have about what needs to be enhanced or changed.
>
> Best practices stop becoming "canned practices" and "most frequently used practices" and begin becoming practices that yield improvement.

My lived experience has helped me realize the importance of being open minded in hiring processes and changing some of the strategies we currently utilize. As an industry, we need to write job descriptions that emphasize the knowledge and skill set needed and not the job functions (Tyrell, 2014).[1] Additionally, job descriptions should influence the skill set of the person we are searching for (Ogburn & Janosik, 2006).[2] While conducting interviews, we should be extra careful in the questions we ask and dig deeper into people's experiences, as this may reveal transferability for the role. Hiring outside of "the norm" can bring some concerns with a potential learning curve. However, the benefits of hiring someone outside the fraternity and sorority field outweigh the risk.

"Are we taking a holistic look at what the candidate can offer, or are we just using resumes as a checklist of fraternity and sorority life achievements that cater to a list of duties also known as a job description?"

Viancca Williams

Viancca Williams serves as the Assistant Director of Fraternity & Sorority Life in the Center for Student Involvement at the University of South Florida (USF). She is an active volunteer for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values (AFLV), and her sorority, Alpha Chi Omega, and serves as a Co-lead Facilitator for LeaderShape and the North American Interfraternity Conference programs. A native of Santurce, Puerto Rico, Viancca earned her B.A. in Psychology from The University of Tampa, her M.Ed. from USF, and is currently in the dissertation phase of her Ph.D. (at USF) focusing on exploring the factors associated with retention and attrition of campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors.

[1] Tyrell, S. (2014). Creating and implementing practices that promote and support quality student affairs professionals. In Ozaki, C. C., Hornak, A. M., & Lunceford, C. J. (Eds.), New Directions for Community Colleges 166 (pp. 63-77). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

[2] Ogburn, E. & Janosik, S.M. (2006). Candidate-centered recruiting and hiring: Improving staffing practices in student affairs. Journal of College and University Student Housing, 34(1), pp. 4-10.

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

WOMEN WORKING AT MEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

NICKI ROWLETT
LAUREN HOPKINS
GRETCHEN FORAN

Within the fraternal industry, popularity of working at organizations that are not one's own has grown in recent years. Specifically, we see more women working at men's organizations than ever before.

Perspectives had the opportunity to chat with Nicki Rowlett, Director of Education and Leadership Programs at Delta Chi Fraternity, Lauren Hopkins, Deputy Executive Director at Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity, and Gretchen Foran, Director of Undergraduate Education at Delta Tau Delta Fraternity, to gather their thoughts and experiences on working at men's fraternity organizations.

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE THE MOST REWARDING PART ABOUT WORKING AT A MEN'S FRATERNITY?

NR: While sitting in a membership review, I asked a newly initiated member about his associate member process and what he gained from the experience. His responses astounded me. They were authentic, venerable, and encompassed what we hoped the associate member program would do. I took immense pride in this because I created the AM program and trained this specific chapter on how to use it. It was very rewarding to see something I created come to life and contribute so positively to Delta Chi.

I also find it rewarding to work with the staff that I do. My male co-workers are very receptive and truly value my input as both a non-member and a female. The staff has never forgotten an important date or milestone in my life and consistently celebrates my accomplishments with me. My co-workers also challenge me in ways that enable me to think critically about my role and the work I do for the organization. This balance of challenge and support has allowed me to feel a part of a team and drastically increased my performance on the job. I am supported, my ideas are welcomed, and my work is celebrated. It is rewarding to work for an organization whose employees give me confidence and treat me with respect.

LH: As a woman living in the time of #MeToo and #TimesUp, my work at a men's fraternity reassures me every day there are still tons of incredible men out there treating every person with dignity and respect, taking action and ownership to address societal issues, and working hard to challenge and raise the standards for what it means to be a man.

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE THE MOST CHALLENGING PART ABOUT WORKING AT A MEN'S FRATERNITY AND BEING A WOMAN?

GF: If you would have asked me this question in 2009 when I first began at a men's headquarters, I would have said working with alumni. While I met many fantastic alumni, I experienced just as many that were angry I was on staff and/or made sexist comments. In the decade since I started though, I rarely, if ever, encounter that issue anymore. Most of the alumni have now been interacting with women working at headquarters — particularly in chapter services roles — for quite some time and the novelty isn't there anymore. I do find I push myself a little harder to prove myself, but for me it's more of an internal than external pressure.

NR: It often seems like men — and more specifically male members of the fraternity — are seen as the "natural leaders" in the organization. For most of my life I have been seen as a natural leader, so I am sure you can imagine the intrapersonal conflict this caused when I

was immersed in this new environment. While "on the job," members would often look past me and question my professional competence because of my "lack of experience as a member." I am not oblivious to the fact that my age and non-member status also plays a role in this, but I also sometimes feel like my womanhood is at the forefront of these interactions. Regardless, I would be lying if I said it didn't chisel away at my patience from time to time.

However, I will say the other staff members have done a phenomenal job at supporting me internally, as well as working with our stakeholders to help establish my authority. This type of advocacy and support has helped me develop my professional presence and increase my confidence.

LH: In a lot of ways, the challenges for me haven't been much different than if I were in any male-dominated field. I've experienced a handful of sexist comments. To give you an example, my supervisor once forwarded me an email he received from an alumnus that attended a student leadership event I presented at. He posited I "would seem much friendlier and more approachable" if I smiled more. I'm confident a male staff person in my role would never have received that same feedback.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU LEARNED/ DISCOVERED IN YOUR ROLE THAT IS UNIQUE TO WORKING AT A MEN'S ORGANIZATION?

GF: In launching new policies or programs I spend more time with the men selling it to them. In my experience working with NPC women's groups they are more used to adopting a top down change due to traditional structures. That doesn't mean I haven't had to market or get buy-in from the women, but I could usually assume they would get on board quickly after an initial conversation. With undergraduate men, I find I need to spend much more time marketing and helping them get on board with an idea, as there is a much stronger culture of chapter identity vs. national identity.

NR: I learned I needed more blazers. I had never been in spaces where I was surrounded by men. Not dressing as professionally as my male counterparts really took a toll on my professional confidence. Honestly, I didn't realize how people look at you differently based upon your appearance until I started working for a men's fraternity. For example, if I am not in a blazer and full face of makeup, I often feel undermined or ignored when working with our members. On the flip side, I continuously find myself questioning my choice of dress more than I did in any other job. Anyone who knows me knows I love a good bright top and all the fashionable accessories. However, since working for Delta Chi, I have been challenged to explore my professional appearance while remaining true to the person I am. I remain grateful for the guidance our staff has given me in this area.

"HONESTLY, I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW **PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU DIFFERENTLY** BASED UPON YOUR APPEARANCE UNTIL I STARTED WORKING FOR A MEN'S FRATERNITY."

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MOST DIFFERENT ABOUT WORKING AT A MEN'S ORGANIZATION AS OPPOSED TO A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION?

NR: Pace and process. While all organizations operate differently, I think we can all agree there is a vast difference between the operations of a NIC fraternity and a NPC sorority (which I am a member of). The timing at which things happen tend to be shorter and more last minute than what I have experienced in previous jobs. I attribute this to the nature of our membership and lean staff that sometimes forces us to jump from one project to another quickly. This leads to another large difference – staffing structure. We typically do not have large staffs, which creates a wider range of responsibilities for each position. I was able to recognize the differences in the staffing structures fairly quickly and continue to develop an understanding of how that impacts the organization, our members, and the stakeholders we work with.

GF: Most different is the level of volunteer involvement in the day-to-day activities of my role. In my experience with women's organizations, there is a much larger and more active volunteer presence. This means there are a lot more opinions to consider and more hoops to jump through to accomplish goals and launch new initiatives. It may also mean you as a staff member work heavily with a board member or national volunteer on those projects. At men's fraternities, the roles are more clearly separated and things can move quickly as projects don't have to be sold to every committee and volunteer. I can just get to work!

I do also feel like I can be more of myself at a men's organization. In my experience, with women there is a pressure to say the right thing, don't swear, and have a certain image at events. While I am still professional and expected to be so, I actually feel much less judged at a men's fraternity by members and volunteers.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS IN A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND LOOKING TO WORK AT A MEN'S FRATERNITY?

GF: Don't try to fit what you know from a women's organization to the men's groups. While women's groups are doing a lot of things right, the challenges, motivations, and structures of men's groups can be different. It is important to be open to learning. Additionally, ask about maternity leave policies if you are considering having children. Many men's organizations have zero paid maternity leave, and it is likely because enough women haven't asked about it.

LH: Don't be afraid to speak up! If they didn't want your input, they wouldn't have hired you; but sometimes you might need to remind them you bring new ideas and perspectives! I am fortunate my supervisor and our board of directors see my value. I have a seat at the table, so I can share in the discussions that shape our work.

NR: First and foremost, try not to view other women as competitors. Especially in our industry, it is easy to fall into this because there are so few of us working for men's organizations and we are all trying to advance ourselves and our careers. Other women in the workplace can become your champions, sounding boards, and biggest supporters. It can be refreshing to have someone on the staff, or with a similar job, that understands your day-to-day work and experiences within your environment.

Second, avoid saying "in XYZ organization, we do it this way." You are not employed within the fraternity to make it like a sorority. The focus in working for a fraternity has to be on needs of the membership; meeting members where they are at is more prevalent in the headquarters realm than professionals like to believe. Work contextually and with intentionality. Don't use your position to integrate what you think fraternity is and how it should be done. Just because you value a specific topic or opinion doesn't mean it is of value to the fraternity. Learn to know and understand that difference.

Another piece of advice centers on feedback. Find opportunities for feedback and be prepared to be criticized for doing things outside of tradition. Using inclusive language like "we," "us," and "ours" will help you align with members of the organization (staff or otherwise) in ways they actually receive. This helps you be less of an "outsider" and more of a team player.

"DON'T USE YOUR POSITION TO INTEGRATE WHAT YOU THINK FRATERNITY IS AND HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE. **JUST BECAUSE YOU VALUE A SPECIFIC TOPIC OR OPINION DOESN'T MEAN IT IS OF VALUE TO THE FRATERNITY.** LEARN TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THAT DIFFERENCE."

Gretchen Foran

Gretchen Foran has over a decade of experience in fraternity and sorority life. She has worked at three different headquarters in Indianapolis – two being men's fraternities – and has spent that time in recruitment, expansion/extension, and education. She volunteers for her own organization, Pi Beta Phi, in a variety of roles, as well as for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors.

Lauren Hopkins

Lauren Hopkins is the Deputy Executive Director at Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity. Lauren became a member of Alpha Gamma Delta at Gannon University, where she earned a dual degree in Special Education and Elementary Education. She went on to earn a master's in Higher Education Administration at Kent State University. Before working at KDR, Lauren was a campus-based fraternity & sorority professional at Virginia Commonwealth University and Case Western Reserve University. Lauren works remotely in Pittsburgh, PA, where she lives with her shih-poo, Ziva.

Nicki Rowlett

A Michigan native, Nicki graduated from Central Michigan University (2013) and Ball State University (2015). She currently serves as the Director of Education & Leadership Programs for Delta Chi Fraternity where she oversees all leadership programs, member development initiatives, and associate member education. Nicki is a proud member and active volunteer of the Delta Phi Epsilon International Sorority. Additionally, Nicki's volunteerism benefits the Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity, the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values, the North-American Interfraternity Conference, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, where she currently serves as the Region III Director. In her spare time, Nicki enjoys cooking, volunteering, and DIY projects around her new house!

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

MEN WORKING AT WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

JASON PAUL GOMEZ
KYLE PENDLETON
WILL FRANKENBERGER

An important part of "the lived experience" in the professional fraternal world is how that experience is shared among colleagues. Often, this requires examining the experience through the lenses of different sets of eyes. Professionals make job transitions from campus to campus or organization to organization. In recent years, we have witnessed the fluidity of many making the transition from campus to headquarters and the reverse. Women in the industry have long held positions at men's organizations, but a newer experience is that of men taking professional positions within women's organizations.

Three men at various positions in their careers made this shift: Jason Paul Gomez, Director of Public Relations at Tri Delta; Kyle Pendleton, Senior Director of Harm Reduction and University Relations at Zeta Tau Alpha; and Will Frankenberger, Director of Risk Prevention and Education at Delta Zeta. They share their experiences on transitioning to the NPC sorority world, what impacted them the most, and what the future holds for men working within sororities.

AFTER YOUR INITIAL TRANSITION TO A CAREER AT A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION, WHAT RESONATED WITH YOU ABOUT YOUR DECISION AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU WANTED TO MAKE?

JPG: It really started at the beginning of my career in the field. Still quite green, I had only been at my first position as a campus-based professional for about two years. Never did I imagine a career shift would take me to a headquarters position, much less a women's organization. The stars (and crescent) aligned for me as someone who was looking for a dynamic personal and professional change that would challenge and develop me. I was fortunate in my brief time on campus to have mentors that fully invested in me and left their handprint on who I am as a professional to this day. This mentoring came from several prominent women in Tri Delta who were there to challenge, develop, and uplift me to the next level and set the bar for further potential.

What attracted me to Tri Delta was the inspiring, purpose-driven women making a difference for college women. This included their own set of risks – like bringing a male in to work directly with sorority chapters. At the time in the mid-2000s, it was a progressive move for the organization. I was the first male to do the work I was doing. Now, it's amazing to see so many women's organizations have brought in men to work in all areas of their enterprise dynamics: working with consultants, risk and harm reduction, fundraising, etc. It is powerful to see a new industry standard where talent and skills are valued at every level of the Panhellenic world, with gender less of a factor.

KP: It was the summer of 2011, and we were four years into a social practice reform initiative at Purdue University. The specifics might sound familiar: BYOB implementation, hard alcohol ban, co-sponsorship issues, and conversations on shared responsibility. I had just finished a panel at the Fraternity Executives Association Conference and got a text that Deb Ensor, Zeta Tau Alpha's Executive Director, wanted to see me in the lobby. When I walked up to her she said, "I just saw your panel – what would it take for you to come work for Zeta?" Without pause I replied, "Not much!"

As I began to talk more with her about the opportunity, and as I met ZTA's dedicated corp of volunteers, it was not only an easy decision, but as Deb pointed out, "an opportunity to reach a greater population." I had been working as a campus professional for almost 15 years and realized I was affecting change and influencing the culture of one campus. However, if I was lucky, others might see our work and implement some of our ideas on another campus. As I had more conversations with Deb Ensor, I quickly realized through providing resources, programming, and support to Zeta chapters, my work would have the potential to affect change on every campus with a chapter of ZTA.

The working relationships I established came with me to "the other side of the street." However, suddenly my professional opportunities grew exponentially as I began to connect with more campus professionals, other organizations' staff, ZTA alumnae/volunteers, and the business partners/vendors of the organization. Take for example the partnership created in 2012 with Alpha Chi Omega, Pi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Nu. What started as groups collaborating to create responsible drinking posters has now transitioned into a harm reduction alliance providing resources on hazing prevention, prescription drug abuse, healthy relationships/sexual assault education, safe spring breaks, and mental wellness. We not only reach the more than 400 campuses with at least one of our organizations, but also campuses and organizations across the United States.

WF: A really "interesting" graduate experience. I wish I could say there was some deep and profound reason for entering the women's headquarters space around empowerment and gender equity, but it really came down to a change. I was not fit for residence life. I printed off my resume and walked to each of the inter/national headquarters in town and asked them to hire me for anything. As luck would have it, Delta Zeta was the first to respond – and that is where it all began. Before saying yes to Delta Zeta, I was not thinking about empowering women as a man, but after many years that has solidified beyond what I ever thought. I love the structure. I love the purposeful connections made between staff, volunteers, and members. It felt natural and like home for me.

The work I do is motivated by women now more than ever before, but my start was not rooted in that motivation. Now, I often discuss with members barriers like gender inequity and unsafe environments that sit in the way of their success. I actively collaborate with members on what we can do together to eliminate those barriers. Sometimes that also means holding a mirror up to our own members to challenge behaviors and norms to ensure they are good partners in helping to create true and lasting friendships, values-based living, and embracing social responsibility. I have come to find a culture and work environment where I can flourish, make a difference, and challenge young minds to think more broadly and safely. The space I am in at Delta Zeta makes me a better professional by allowing me to change our industry for the better. I really should be thankful for the experiences that pushed me out of residence life and into this opportunity!

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST EYE OPENER FOR YOU IN YOUR TIME WITH A NPC SORORITY?

JPG: Personally, it has been longevity and professional agility. I have entered my 15th year as a professional sorority man. That many years with one organization or institution is certainly considered a lifetime! I am fortunate to remain with an organization like Tri Delta that continues to see my growth, potential, and future – and allows me to be on that journey with them. I could not be more thankful in the investment Tri Delta has made in me. I have been provided the opportunities to zig and zag internally when necessary and when my career path needed it the most. While I started in the chapter operations realm, I now have an opportunity to use the skill sets and education I earned as a journalist. My roles, titles, and offices have changed, but what remains constant is my desire to see Tri Delta grow and to play a part in that.

Tri Delta makes this investment in its talent the same way it does our membership. We constantly find new ways to meet members where they are and fulfill the needs of the moment. It keeps us on the precipice of staying relevant for our members of all ages for today and tomorrow.

WF: In my experience working for both a men's and women's organization, the professional and personal passion our volunteers and alumnae bring to the table is different in the sorority space compared to many men's groups.

In men's spaces, there is often a distance between staff and volunteers as they work together, and I found more often than not the volunteers were a stop gap for the collegiate men's development – not always and not in every organization, but frequently in my experience. This is compared to my experience at Delta Zeta where I have enjoyed the healthiest working relationships with my colleagues and supervisor. I find that Delta Zeta cares deeply about my development and balance. The ability to work from home, like many of my colleagues in Delta Zeta, is something that makes my job not a job, but a passion. Delta Zeta was a true pioneer in this area, and the longevity of employees within the organization speaks volumes to that effort. As an almost entirely remote staff, my colleagues and I work hard to ensure we are efficient, and when we are together as a group it is always one of the happiest reunions.

It has been such an eye-opening experience to see an organization care so deeply about finding the right solutions for sustainable, simple, and scalable change rather than just a band-aid – it comes with lots of work, but the payoff is always worth it. The synergy between the volunteers, staff, and most importantly collegians is contagious and allows us to move the needle in helping to change community-wide culture.

KP: During this time of uncertainty and challenge, I highly value my diversified views and experiences, which I would not have if not for working at a women's organization. ZTA has reinforced the unwavering commitment of the power of volunteers, which not only have full-time jobs and families, but log countless hours, nights, and weekends with chapters and alumnae groups. The organization works to ensure its 173 chapters have a full advisory team in place, supported by another regional layer of volunteers, who are supported by the National Council and staff. ZTA is not unique with this model of chapter support – this is something most NPC women's groups take great pride in saying.

This is just one example of ways we all can learn from each other and share resources. Having been both a campus-based professional and on the staff of an international organization, I have come to the conclusion that recently, our silos have started to create silos and we still have a long way to go in relation to collectively working together. It seems like right now everyone has a work group, initiative, or strategic plan to address the future of fraternity and sorority life. Regardless of where I have worked or volunteered, my focus has (and will continue to be) on the intersection of our professional efforts. It requires more than campuses working better with inter/national organizations. It is men's organizations working with women's groups, senior campus administrators working with senior organizational staff, umbrella groups working collectively, and professional associations advocating and including each other in their conversations.

Being able to see through many lenses (campus, international office staff, and as an AFA past resident) is not a skill I take for granted. Rather, it is one I use every day as a higher education professional and fraternity and sorority advocate. A lesson learned, supported and reinforced daily in my work with Zeta Tau Alpha.

Jason Paul Gomez
Jason has worked for Delta Delta Delta's Executive Office in multiple roles. He now serves as the Director of Public Relations.

Kyle Pendleton
Kyle works for Zeta Tau Alpha as the Senior Director of Harm Reduction and University Relations. He is also a longtime volunteer for AFA and served the Association as the 2007 President.

Will Frankenberger
Will works for Delta Zeta Sorority as the Director of Risk Prevention and Education.

"IT REQUIRES **MORE THAN CAMPUSES WORKING BETTER WITH INTER/NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.** IT IS MEN'S ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS, SENIOR CAMPUS ADMINISTRATORS WORKING WITH SENIOR ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF, UMBRELLA GROUPS WORKING COLLECTIVELY, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ADVOCATING AND INCLUDING EACH OTHER IN THEIR CONVERSATIONS."

FROM PERSPECTIVES TO PRACTICE

On average, American adults process 34 gigabytes (more than 100,000 words) of information daily. Our lives are flooded with Google searches, YouTube videos, Facebook and Twitter posts, and a never-ending feed of suggested reading, watching, and listening. Media consumption is a constant task – conscious and subconscious – to separate the trivial from the significant, process new information and discern meaning.

Perspectives provides a forum for ideas, opinions and experiences that is thought-provoking and innovative; shares new information; highlights best practices; and challenges thought. As a quarterly publication, we recognize *Perspectives* is a microscopic part of your general – and professional – information consumption reality. We want to ensure the content published in *Perspectives* is communicated, positioned, and promoted in a way that maximizes impact by encouraging continued discussion and informing practical application.

"From Perspectives to Practice" aims to provide a guide for learning through a focus on continued discussion, engagement, and action. You'll find this section at the end of each issue. We hope it helps you critically examine the viewpoints offered, make meaning of the content, and identify ways for further engagement through applying the ideas in these pages to your everyday practice.

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS PUBLICATION

1. Engage with the content : Read the article more than once, and as you are reading, do the following:

- Identify one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea you learned
- Determine why you identified that piece of information as important
- Apply what you learned from the article to some aspect of your work
- Take it a step further: What question(s) does the article raise for you? What are you still wondering about? What do you agree or disagree with?

2. Reflect : what stood out to you in each article? What new information was presented? Did you experience any "aha" moments?

3. Share & Discuss : Take those highlights and insights and discuss them with friends. Share them with stakeholders. Create an idea pipeline and see how the concept(s) evolve.

4. Write About It : Did something resonate with you? Frustrate you? Did reflection lead to brilliance? Put those thoughts into words and add your own viewpoints to the discussion.

5. Put it into practice : What is a key takeaway that can inform your work? How can you take that information and apply it? What is realistic? What is a longer term goal?

**Adapted from the 2017 Unmistakable Creative post, "A Quick and Effective Guide to Remember and Apply What You Read."*

CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Passing as Gold

Discussion Question: How does your social class identity in your early years compare to your social class identity now? How does this impact your professional practice?

Discussion Question: Are there social class disparities within the fraternity/sorority community you work with? How can you make space for students or colleagues that might feel less-than?

Even if you in a Benz, you still a n***a in a coupe

Discussion Question: In this article, the author references her "internalized racial oppression" and shares stories from her efforts to assimilate to whiteness during her undergraduate education. Think about the communities, organizations or students you work with. Do you see students struggling with this stage of identity development in those spaces? How do you respond and support?

Discussion Question: The author discusses privilege within the profession and shares one specific example of how privilege manifests. What are other examples of this, and what needs to happen to increase awareness of such privilege and its impact across the association?

Scars Are Beautiful

Discussion Question: In this article, the author mentions how his "self-imposed social stigma was powerful enough to silence" him. What "self-imposed social stigmas" might you place upon yourself that keep you from sharing your stories?

Discussion Question: A central theme in this article is "creating a ripple" by sharing personal experiences - no matter how difficult it may be - to help others find their own voices and heightened senses of belonging. Consider this concept within your work or personal life - in what ways can you help others (students, co-workers, family, friends, etc.) find their voices by using your own?

Taking the Leap

Discussion Question: In this article, the author notes we are often fooled into thinking there is a "right way" to do this profession - a set of experiences one must accumulate to be successful. In reality, there are many ways to be content and make an impact in this work. How can we individually and as a field do a better job of reinforcing the message that "one size doesn't fit all" in an effort to avoid burnout and forge more sustainable career paths?

Discussion Question: A strong theme of resiliency exists in this article as the author shares the intersections of her career and personal challenges faced while on that path. How do you continue to build resiliency personally and/or professionally? How do you support those around you in their own resiliency-building journeys?

This Is Not My First Career: A Case for Non-Traditional Hiring in Fraternity/Sorority Advising

Discussion Question: This article asserts we often devalue experiences outside of the traditional higher education and/or fraternity and sorority affairs career path as it relates to career readiness for this field. Do you agree or disagree? If you agree, what underlying reasons might cause that fallacy to occur?

Discussion Question: Consider previous hiring experiences you participated in or conducted - how did you or your department approach reviewing applications and determining who moved forward in the process? Can you recall any biases based on career background that kept a strong candidate from moving forward? If so, how can you prevent those biases from impacting future hiring decisions?

Flipping the Script: Women Working at Men's Organizations

Discussion Question: How might traditional norms within the fraternity and sorority industry associated with gender identity and expression be considered and discussed within the context of this article?

Discussion Question: This article speaks from the lenses of women employed by NIC fraternities. How might we expand this concept to consider the experiences, challenges and opportunities of individuals that identify as women volunteering for male organizations, working in other male-dominated fields, or navigating spaces based on gender, generally?

Flipping the Script: Men Working at Women's Organizations

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CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Read the following Essentials and Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors articles that relate to the topics discussed in this issue:

- **Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, Volume 14, Issue 1, Summer 2019:** Needs and stress in fraternity and sorority life: Evidence of social and behavioral differences among sorority and fraternity members by Gabriel Sema, Dawn Wiese, Plaid, and Stephen Simo
- **May 2019 Essentials:** Everything I Learned Not to Do, I Learned From My Supervisor by Emily Mitch & Dan Faill
- **April 2018 Essentials:** After the Assault: Self-Care for Recovery by Brittany Piper
- **December 2018 Essentials:** Intersect to Connect by Tenea Lowery
- **March 2017 Essentials:** Vulnerability Saved My Life by Andrew Naab

Check out the following books, articles, podcasts, or videos/shows that can enhance discussion of topics in this issue:

- *The Three Languages of Politics: Talking Across the Political Divides* by Arnold Kling
- *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath
- TEDxHouston: Brené Brown - "The Power of Vulnerability"
- TED2012: Andrew Stanton - "The Clues to a Great Story"
- Louise Hay Affirmations - https://www.louisehay.com/affirmations/

Ongoing personal and professional development opportunities tied to this issue theme:

- Check out the 2019 National Storytelling Summit from July 25 - 28 in Fremont, CA, as part of the National Storytelling Network that strives to create "a world in which all people value the power of storytelling and its ability to connect, inspire, and instill respect within our hearts and communities."
- Consider practicing mindfulness through Oprah and Deepak's 21-Day Meditation Experience, Manifesting Grace through Gratitude

CONTINUED ACTION

1. Read and/or consider contributing to upcoming editions of Essentials and Oracle

2. Select an article to discuss at an upcoming staff or division meeting, council meeting, with students, etc. – use it as a discussion topic to kick off the meeting and then share the conversation's outcome with the hashtag #AFAPerspectives

3. Review the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors Core Competencies and identify ways the content relates or doesn't relate – how can you use the information gained to continue to build your professional competence?

4. Circulate an article that resonates with stakeholders based on your campus, organization, vendor, or company's circumstances

5. Look outside of the industry – what concepts relate, challenge, and/or inform our thinking and practice? Who else can we learn from?

6. Reflect and write for a future issue of Perspectives: The remaining 2019 themes are "workplace environments" (Issue 3) and "data-driven practices" (Issue 4) - email borton@deltau.org or brookegoodman01@gmail.com with questions, article ideas, and/or submissions

7. Stay curious: Ask questions, challenge ideas, and see how this content can spark ongoing thought and practice

CALL FOR PERSPECTIVES AUTHORS

We want you to write for AFA Perspectives!

CONTACT THE 2019 EDITORS
TO SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLE IDEA

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